

New Underwood School District 51-3
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August 26, 2010

Department of Education
Attn: Diane Lowry
700 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

Subject: School Improvement Grant – New Underwood High School

As you are aware, the current leadership of the New Underwood School District has spent a considerable amount of time, research and discussion with advisors and district stakeholders in an effort to insure we have properly designed and will utilize the School Improvement Grant awarded to the district. To this end, the following bullet comments will address recommendations for your consideration. The items are not in any special order or priority.

1. **RFP #2 – Reading, Math & Technology Coaches:** The initial grant submission budgeted \$37,500 for the seventy-five (75) days of coaching support. (\$500.00 per day) Only two vendors submitted a proposal consideration. Of the two, only the proposal from TIE met the specifics of the proposal, meeting the 75 total days. TIE's proposal however, came in at \$56,500 for the 75 days of coaching. (\$753.33 per day)

Recommendation: Award TIE the RFP at \$48,750.00. (\$650.00 per day)

Impact: Adjust budget item for year one from \$37,500.00 up to \$48,750.00.

(Increase of \$11,250)

2. **Core Curriculum Position:** The initial grant submission included a core curriculum position. It is felt that this position should instead be listed as a Reading and Math Interventionist Position. This position will be utilized in a manner closely paralleling a RTI instructor. New Underwood School District has advertised for and hired an instructor for this position. The current plan of action is for that individual to begin the Praxis process to become highly qualified in both reading and math instruction at the high school level. This individual will also service junior high students in our district, so the position will be funded 60% by SIG funds and 40% with local funds.

Recommendation: Change the title and duties of the position.

Impact: Adjust budget to reflect the 60/40 split on this position.

(Decrease of \$12,000 (salary) + \$3,958 (benefits) = \$15,958)

3. **Principal Training:** The initial grant submission failed to provide for specific training for the High School Principal in the area of Instructional Leadership. It is believed that effective schools must have effective leaders. It is felt the high school principal would benefit greatly from attendance at the Instructional Leadership course being taught by Dr. Ed Porthan. This course is being offered by School Administrators of South Dakota this year.

Recommendation: Add this provision to the SIG for year one.

Impact: Adjust the budget for year one to reflect these cost.

(Increase of \$2,000.00 (tuition, travel, lodging, meals))

4. **Systematic Approach to Professional Development:** The initial grant submission failed to provide for a meaningful, systematic approach to Professional Development. Our focus in this regard is to lead teachers toward recognizing and implementing highly effective teaching vs. just teaching. I believe an excellent resource to assist the district in this undertaking is again Dr. Ed Porthan. Dr. Porthan has a proven track record of utilizing research based instructional models to raise the bar and improve classroom teaching practices. Our intent is to have Dr. Porthan provide 4-5 one day sessions with our staff, providing training dedicated to this goal. This training will also serve to lay the foundation for the Instructional Leadership practices being taught to the principal, to be fully implemented into our district. As the Superintendent, I have already attended the Instructional Leadership training and am capable of providing support to implement these practices in our district.

Recommendation: Add this provision to the SIG for year one.

Impact: Adjust the budget for year one to reflect these cost.

(Increase: Speaker cost, travel, lodging, materials for 4-5 sessions = \$10,000)

5. **Professional Development for Masters Degrees:** The initial grant submission provided \$36,000 for current staff to pursue a Masters Degree. Given the number of staff who already have a Masters Degree and the number who have stated they are intending to pursue a Masters Degree in year one, this number can be reduced considerably. It is estimated that \$20,000 will be sufficient to cover any costs associated with this budget item.

Recommendation: Reduce this item and apply the savings to other areas.

Impact: Provides for a better use of funds to meet adjusted district goals.

(Decrease of \$16,000.00)

As identified above, the recommended additions and changes are sufficient to remain within the initial budget provided for year one. The net result is actually a savings of \$8,708.00 for year one. This money can be moved to years two or three for programs to be identified as we are able to monitor progress and adjust to the needs of the district. I am confident you will find these recommendations to be sound educational practices and that when implemented will greatly serve the students and staff of the New Underwood as they move down the road toward becoming a distinguished school district.

Should you have any further questions regarding these recommendations, please feel free to call or write. Thank you for your review of these recommendations and for your support to the New Underwood District.

Sincerely,

Jeff Marlette
Superintendent

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